

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OCON, ESCAP, TGEN

SUBJECT: ESCAP: INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING ON THE ESTABLISH-
MENT OF THE REGIONAL CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

REF: (A) STATE 031982; (B) STATE 058512

1. SUMMARY. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTEL A, EMBASSY OFFICER ATTENDED MOST SESSIONS OF THE SUBJECT MEETING. THE MEETING CONSIDERED THE DRAFT PROJECT DOCUMENT RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT AT BANGALORE, INDIA, OF THE PROPOSED REGIONAL CENTER OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND FORMALLY APPROVED IT WITH MINOR CHANGES. THE GROUP ALSO PASSED A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE ESCAP EXECUTIVE SECRETARY TO ACCEPT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S OFFER OF HOST FACILITIES, TO ESTABLISH A SKELETON STAFF TO LAUNCH THE CENTER AND ASK MEMBER COUNTRIES TO DESIGNATE A NATIONAL CENTER WITH WHICH THE CENTER CAN LIAISE. THE RESOLUTION ASKS UNDP TO ACCORD HIGH PRIORITY IN ALLOCATING FINANCE AND CALLS ON MEMBER GOVERNMENTS TO PLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS. THE REPORT OF THE MEETING WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE 33RD ESCAP ANNUAL SESSION. END SUMMARY.

2. NINETEEN COUNTRIES WERE REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING PLUS
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ISRAEL ATTENDING IN A CONSULTATIVE CAPACITY. THE APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN POUCHED TO CHAVEAS. THE MAIN ISSUES ARISING FROM DISCUSSIONS WERE: (A) MEMBERSHIP OF THE CENTER'S GOVERNING COUNCIL; (B) THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CENTER; AND, (C) THE FINANCING OF THE CENTER.

3. MEMBERSHIP ON THE GOVERNING COUNCIL CENTERED ON WHETHER

THE CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CENTER'S ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE SOLELY IN THE HANDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OR SHARED WITH THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. THE UNCAD REPRESENTATIVE, PATEL, DELIVERED AN EMOTIONAL AND BIASED ADDRESS ON THE OPENING DAY BASED ON THE THEME THAT THE GAP BETWEEN DC'S AND LDC'S HAD WIDENED BECAUSE THE FORMER FAILED TO PASS THEIR TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERTISE TO THE LATTER. THIS GAP WOULD CONTINUE TO GROW UNTIL THE LDC'S OBTAINED THE KNOW-HOW AND MADE THEMSELVES TECHNOLOGICALLY INDEPENDENT BY FREEING THEMSELVES FROM THE EXPLOITATION OF THE DC'S. BY IMPLICATION THE CENTER SHOULD BE CONTROLLED SOLELY BY THE LDC'S.

4. IN RESPONSE, A NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES STRESSED THE NEED TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF UNDERSTANDING AND MUTUAL TRUST BETWEEN DC'S AND LDC'S. TECHNOLOGY HAD ITS PRICE AND IN MANY CASES HAD BEEN DEVELOPED AT GREAT EXPENSE AND COULD NOT SIMPLY BE HANDED OVER ON DEMAND. IT WAS NEGOTIABLE AND THE PROBLEM WAS TO ENSURE THAT ITS TRANSFER WAS ARRANGED ON FAIR AND EQUITABLE TERMS, BEARING IN MIND THE NEEDS OF THE LDC'S. THIS COULD NOT BE ACHIEVED BY ABUSING THE DC'S, CREATING AN ARTIFICIAL ATMOSPHERE OF HOSTILITY OR EXCLUDING THEM FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE CENTER. MOREOVER, THE ASSISTANCE OF THE DC'S WAS NEEDED TO FINANCE THE CENTER. THIS VIEW WAS ACCEPTED BY THE MEETING.

5. DURING DISCUSSION CONCERNING MEMBERSHIP OF THE GOVERNING BOARD, FRANCE INSISTED ON HAVING AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE ELECTED AND WAS SUPPORTED BY THE USSR. SOME LDC'S, INCLUDING SRI LANKA, WERE CONCERNED THAT IF THE DC'S WERE ALLOWED TO

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PARTICIPATE, THEY WOULD SOON CONTROL AFFAIRS TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE LDC'S. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION, IT WAS AGREED THAT NON-REGIONAL MEMBERS COULD PARTICIPATE AS OBSERVERS ON THE BOARD BUT THAT THEIR NUMBERS BY INFORMAL ARRANGEMENT BE LIMITED TO THREE. THE FRENCH FELT ON THIS BASIS THEY COULD CONTRIBUTE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE CENTER.

6. JAPAN OBTAINED AN AMENDMENT ALLOWING "CONTRIBUTING" MEMBERS TO BE "PARTICIPATING" MEMBERS AND THUS ELIGIBLE FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD. AS ORIGINALLY DRAFTED, IT WAS UNCLEAR WHETHER A DC, EVEN IF IN THE ESCAP REGION, COULD BE A "PARTICIPATING" MEMBER. THE BOARD NOW CONSISTS OF NINE ELECTED MEMBERS AND FOUR EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS, THE LATTER TO INCLUDE THE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER AND ONE REPRESENTATIVE EACH FROM ESCAP, UNIDO AND UNCTAD.

7. AUSTRALIA OBTAINED AN AMENDMENT STATING THAT REPRESENTATION ON THE GOVERNING BOARD BE DRAWN TO EXTENT POSSIBLE FROM ALL PARTS OF THE REGION AND FROM COUNTRIES OF VARYING LEVELS

OF DEVELOPMENT. THIS WAS TO ENSURE THAT THE PACIFIC REGION WOULD NOT BE NEGLECTED IN THE RUSH FOR SEATS BY COUNTRIES OF THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT.

8. DISCUSSION ON THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CENTER FOCUSSED ON AVOIDING DUPLICATION OF THE WORK OF VARIOUS NATIONAL CENTERS FOR TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER. INSTEAD, THE CENTER SHOULD ACT AS CO-ORDINATOR AND LINK BETWEEN THE NATIONAL CENTERS. SOME DELEGATS, INCLUDING BANGLADESH, STRESSED THE CENTER WAS ONLY VIABLE IF NATIONAL CENTERS WERE ESTABLISHED CONCURRENTLY. OTHERS, INCLUDING INDONESIA, FELT THE ESCAP CENTR SHOULD NOT IN ANY WAY SEEK TO INTERFERE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL CENTERS BUT RATHER TO COOPERATE WITH THEM. THE NATIONAL CENTERS COULD NOT BE ANSWERABLE TO THE ESCAP CENTER SINCE THIS WOULD BE INTERFERENCE IN A COUNTRY'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS NOR COULD ESCAP INSIST THAT COUNTRIES ESTABLISH THEIR OWN CENTERS. THE CONCEPT OF A "NETWORK" WAS UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTED.
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9. A SECOND POINT WHICH WAS EMPHASIZED WAS THE NEED FOR THE NEW CENTER TO ESTABLISH CLOSE COORDINATION OF ITS ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES OPERATING IN THE SAME AREA AND TO AVOID OVERLAP OR DUPLICATION WITH THOSE AGENCIES.

10. THE MEETING NOTED THAT THE CENTER SHOULD BE EMPOWERED TO DEAL WITH ALL ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING PROCEDURES IN PATENTING AND LICENSING IN TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY. SOME DELEGATES OPPOSED THE NOTION EXPRESSED IN THE PROJECT DOCUMENT THAT THE "THINK TANK" WAS ONE OF THE CENTER'S MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS. A REFERENCE WAS INCLUDED IN THE FINAL REPORT THAT "SOME" DELEGATIONS RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS A MEANS OF ENSURING THE WIDEST POSSIBLE DIFFUSION TO ALL LEVELS IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION. IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE WHOLE QUESTION OD TRANSFER IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR WAS A MATTER OF SOME SENSITIVITY AND ONE WHICH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITHIN THE UNCTAD FRAMEWORK.

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11. THERE WAS UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT THAT ESCAP SHOULD BE DESIGNATED EXECUTING AGENCY FOR THE PROJECT WITH FULL SUPPORT FROM UNCTAD, UNIDO AND UNDP. THE REPRESENTATIVES OF ILO, WIPO AND FAO PLEDGED COOPERATION IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF THE CENTER.

12. FINANCING THE CENTER IS NOT ASSURED. THE DOCUMENT OUTLINES A BUDGET OF U.S. \$6,492,590 OVER FIVE YEARS, OR ABOUT \$1.3 MILLION ANNUALLY. THE DIVISION CHIEF, HUSSAIN, EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS THE OPTIMUM OBJECTIVE AND IF FINANCES WERE NOT FORTHCOMING, THE ACTIVITIES WOULD BE SCALED DOWN. THE CENTER WOULD BEGIN WITH ONLY A SKELETON STAFF.

13. THE INITIAL DRAFT DOCUMENT STATED THAT THE BULK OF THE FUN
ING WOULD COME FROM UNDP WITH THE REMAINDER FROM OTHER UN AGENCIES AND FROM INDIVIDUAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS. THE UNDP REPRESENTATIVE QUICKLY STATED THAT EXPECTATIONS OF UNDP FUNDING ON THIS SCALE WERE MISPLACED. UNDP'S INITIAL CONTRIBUTION WOULD BE \$100,000, ALTHOUGH THIS MIGHT BE RAISED IN THE SECOND YEAR TO \$200,000 IF THE CENTER BECAME PROPERLY OPERATIONAL AND THE PROJECT DOCUMENT PROVED SATISFACTORY.
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14. ONLY THREE GOVERNMENTS WERE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE CONTRIBUTIONS: INDIA (\$150,000) PLUS THE SITE AND PROPERTY FOR THE BANGALORE HEADQUARTERS, FRANCE (\$20,000), (48)- (\$2,500). THE USSR AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO OFFER NON-FINANCIAL AID. THE NETHERLANDS SAID THEY WOULD DEFINITELY ASSIST. AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN SAID THAT ASSISTANCE WOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING. THE U.S. AND ISRAEL WELCOMED THE ACTIVITY, WERE SYMPATHETIC BUT MADE NO COMMITMENT. UNCTAD AND UNIDO PROMISED "SOME" FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

15. COMMENT. THERE SEEMED AN AIR OF RELIEF AMONG MANY DELE-

GATIONS THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CENTER, AFTER FIVE YEARS CONSIDERATION, HAD GOTTEN OFF THE GROUND. SOME DC'S CLEARLY HOPE THAT THE CENTER'S ACTIVITIES WILL PROVE A MEANS OF OBTAINING TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS. THEY ALSO SEE THE CENTER AS A STEP IN GIVING EFFECT TO THE PROGRAM OF ACTION SET OUT IN THE UNGA RESOLUTION ON A NIEO. LITTLE THOUGHT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE PRACTICAL ASPECT OF TRANSFERRING TECHNOLOGY AND SOME SEEMED CONVINCED THAT ONCE THE TECHNOLOGY WAS HANDED OVER, THE GAP BETWEEN DC'S AND LDC'S WOULD AUTOMATICALLY CLOSE AND THEIR PROBLEMS SOLVED. LITTLE MENTION WAS MADE OF THE NEED ON THE PART OF THE LDC'S TO CREATE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK TO ENABLE THE IMPORTED TECHNOLOGY TO TAKE ROOT AND MATERIALLY CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE POTENTIAL OF THE CENTER WILL LARGELY DEPEND UPON ITS MANAGEMENT AND A PRACTICAL WORK PROGRAM. WHITEHOUSE

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